

Traffic Safety News and Facts for Employers January 17, 2006

Michigan News

11th Annual Michigan Traffic Safety Summit

Register now to attend the 11th Annual Michigan Traffic Safety Summit taking place February 28 – March 1, 2006 at the Sheraton Lansing Hotel. Racing legend Ernie Irvan will be the featured speaker during Tuesday's opening session. Other conference topics include: Highway Safety Technology; Traffic Records; Incident Management; Lane Departure; Vehicle Technology and Roadway Safety; Traffic Engineering; Sports Marketing; Youth Driver Education; Intersection Safety; Occupant Protection and teen Belt Use; Legislation; Pedestrians, Bikes, Motorcycles; Drugs and Alcohol. Link to the following website for a more information including a copy of the conference registration form, exhibitors are also welcome: http://www.michigan.gov/msp/0,1607,7-123-1593_3504-106853--,00.html

4th Annual Michigan Truck Exhibition and Safety Symposium

The 4th Annual Symposium will be held at the Sheraton Hotel in Lansing, Michigan, February 21 – 22, 2005. This year's event will cover topics on the following areas: Behavior indicators to predict future crash involvement for CMV drivers, presented by the American Transportation Research Institute; IRP and IFTA Q & A; HazMat Recertification; Act 181 Driver Qualification Updates; Driver Wellness; Drug and Alcohol Testing; & Defensive Driving. For more information about the Symposium, check out the "sneak preview" at www.truckingsafety.org, or call the Michigan Trucking Association at (517) 321-1951.

NETS Feature

Changing Focus of Motor-Vehicle Transportation

It used to be that a car's sole purpose was to get you from one place to another. But today it's all about how much you and your passengers can be entertained along the way.

...More http://www.trafficsafety.org/newsletter/focus_011506feat.asp

Latest Traffic Safety News

Waste Management Firms Agrees To Settlement After Fatal Crash

A Fort Worth waste-disposal company is the second Fort Worth trucking firm in December to be hit with a multimillion-dollar settlement after one of its vehicles was involved in a fatal crash. The company agreed to an out-of-court settlement that requires them to pay the victim's family \$2.25 million. The settlement comes amid questions about the garbage truck's maintenance record, as well as the driver's qualifications

Who Says Bigger Is Better?

A recent car-shopping survey reported that 42 percent of consumers would "definitely" buy a very small car, which could be an indicator of a comeback for smaller vehicles. Automakers are now unleashing a line-up of "pint-sized cars" that experts say will shake things up in an industry that for

years seemed to be focusing only on bigger and bigger vehicles. Read the full article at

<http://www.detnews.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060110/AUTO04/601100348/1148/AUTO01>

IIHS: SUVs, Pick-Up Trucks Fail To Protect Neck

Head restraints in several sport/utility vehicles and pickup trucks did a poor job of protecting test dummies from neck injuries in a simulated rear crash at 20 mph, according to recent crash tests conducted by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. Only six of the 44 SUVs and none of the 15 pickups tested earned top scores of "good" for their seat and head restraints. For more information visit <http://www.iihs.org/news/2006/pr010806.html>

States To Toughen Laws Against Drivers Who Refuse Alcohol Breath Test

States are trying to toughen penalties for suspected alcohol-impaired drivers who refuse to take a breath test, making the argument that motorists too often get a milder penalty than if they had provided evidence that could convict them. Currently, legislation is pending in four states to lengthen license suspensions or make it a criminal offense to refuse a test. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), an average of 25 percent of people pulled over on suspicion of drunken driving refuse to take a breath test.

Rental Car Company Makes GPS Readily Available

Enterprise-Rent-A-Car recently announced its plans to make portable in-vehicle navigational systems available at its airport locations. Plus, it is available for the low rate of \$7.95 a day. However, there are safety concerns. Travelers will now be using an unfamiliar car and unfamiliar technology, which could potentially increase crash risk.

Hostile Drivers Act The Same When Not Behind The Wheel

University of Minnesota researchers recently studied 710 drivers ages 18 to 45, and concluded that the biggest "hostile drivers" on the road act the same when they step out from behind the wheel. The study also found that hostile people are more likely to drink and drive, take more road risks, and show more anger toward other drivers, police, and construction delays.

The Latest From GM: A Car That Doesn't Crash

How does it work? GM recently conducted a pilot program using several Cadillac STS and CTS sedans that were equipped with transponders that send out electronic pulses that are read by other transponders. The transponders tell an onboard computer where the other cars are located. If a car travelling ahead stops suddenly, the transponder can see it and warns the driver in its car via vehicle icons in an instrument panel or by vibrating the seat. The car will automatically brake if a collision seems imminent. Read the full article at

http://www.businessweek.com/autos/content/jan2006/bw20060106_282679.htm

Delaware Eliminates On-Line Class Tests

New regulations governing defensive driving courses in Delaware will require students taking online defensive driving courses to go to the school's office in Delaware and show government identification to prove they are the person who enrolled in the course. Currently, a student taking an online class goes to a testing center for the exam and then receives proof of course completion. Removing the test eliminates a way to prove the student took the course and learned the material, according to some safety experts. Read the full article at

http://www.newszip.com/articles/2006/01/05/dm/central_delaware/dsn02.txt

Marketing The Family Vehicle Takes A New Turn

Not too long ago, automakers attempted to market to parents through their children by putting characters from cartoons and kids' TV shows and movies in ads for minivans and SUVs. But one survey found that parents disdained the "mom-mobile" label attached to family vehicles and resented automotive advertising aimed at children. So how are automakers making family vehicles more appealing? Automakers are moving towards more of a lifestyle focus when it comes to advertising. Read the full article at

<http://www.autonews.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060102/FREE/51229030/1011/REG&Profile=1011>

Florida DOT Conducts Crash Report To Address Safety Concerns

The Florida Department of Transportation released a report examining the causes of fatal traffic crashes and traffic fatalities in order to improve safety on Florida's highways. According to the report, the number of highway fatalities in Florida was 40 percent above the national average on a per vehicle mile basis. The report found that run off the road (32%) and intersection crashes (28%) were the most common crash types, followed by pedestrian (16%) and rear-end/sideswipe (14%) crashes. Almost a quarter of the at-fault drivers were younger than 25, and more than 13% were over age 64. View the full report at http://www.dot.state.fl.us/research-center/Completed_Proj/Summary_SF/FDOT_BD050_rpt.pdf

Marijuana Use Increases Fatal Crash Risk

A new report by the British Medical Journal shows that driving under the influence of marijuana almost doubles the risk of a fatal traffic crash. However, the number of fatal crashes involving marijuana use is significantly lower than those involving alcohol. The risk of being responsible for a fatal crash increased as the blood concentration of cannabis increased.

Hospital, Medical School Team Up To Examine Police Officer Fatigue

Researchers from Brigham and Women's Hospital and Harvard Medical School are asking police officers to participate in a confidential survey to help identify and manage work-related sleep and health issues. It is hoped that the data will help physicians better identify and treat health and safety risks that are inherent to police officers.

Consumer Digest Questions NHTSA, IIHS Crash Tests

Consumer Digest is joining ranks with the critics of NHTSA and IIHS's crash tests. The publication is specifically questioning the methodology, objectivity and sensibility of the tests. In "Crash Tests: What's Behind the Auto Safety Ratings," which will run in the February issue of Consumer Digest, NHTSA is criticized for an out-of-date scheme in conducting its frontal-crash test program, while IIHS is criticized for being more concerned with testing vehicles to evaluate potential for insurance claims rather than overall crashworthiness. For more information visit <http://www.prnewswire.com/cgi-bin/stories.pl?ACCT=109&STORY=/www/story/12-13-2005/0004233149&EDATE=>

Police To Motorists: 'Stop Means Stop'

Police in Chicago are reminding motorists that "rolling stops" are not stops. To get the word out, an additional sign has been installed underneath regular stop signs that read: "Stop Means Stop." For more information visit http://www.parkridge.us/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=58&

U.S. Department Of Defense Limits Cell Phone Use On Military Bases

The U.S. Department of Defense has begun implementing new cell phone restrictions for drivers on military bases. The new regulation will prohibit anyone driving a motor vehicle on a DoD installation

from using a cell phone, unless the vehicle is safely parked or the driver is using a hands-free device. For more information visit http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Jan2006/20060105_3844.html

NTSB Leader Calls On Electronics Industry To Emphasize Safety

The acting Chairman of the National Transportation Safety Board has called on the consumer electronics industry to use technology to reduce the death toll caused by distracted drivers. He recently told participants of the International Consumer Electronics Show that "the driving environment has gotten more complex, making it more challenging to successfully accomplish the driving task." He noted that technology can improve safety in the driving environment, and adopting safety enhancements and making them readily available to consumers should be an industry priority.

NETS Presents e-Seminar On Integrating EDRs Into Corporate Safety Plans

Event data recorders (EDRs) can unlock the secrets about the final moments before a crash by objectively recording data that determine vehicle performance, driver performance, and the force or severity of the crash. Was the incident a result of human error, vehicle malfunction or both? Was the driver wearing a seat belt, did they hit the brakes and what was their speed? DriveCam and Classic Transportation join NETS this Thursday, January 19th to discuss how this technology works and how it can reduce insurance losses by more than 50%. To register for the e-seminar, click here or visit the NETS website at <http://www.trafficsafety.org>.

Indiana Considers Fining Bad Drivers

State transportation officials in Indiana are considering fining motorists who cause crashes that lead to traffic jams, a first-of-its-kind concept that is drawing mixed reactions from lawmakers and others. Known as a "bad driver surcharge," the fee is meant to curtail traffic-snarling crashes on Indiana's most congested interstates and roads. The measure is among a collection of nontraditional revenue ideas from the Indiana Department of Transportation. Read the full article at <http://www.indystar.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060101/NEWS01/601010433&SearchID=73231433526895>

Automakers Try To Appeal To Emerging Generation Y Drivers

It is estimated that 4 million Generation Y drivers will come of driving age every year through 2010. And automakers have noticed. What are Generation Y drivers looking for in a vehicle? Practicality and style are major considerations among the key 18-to-24-year-old age group. Read the full article at <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/10651872/>

Auto Safety Group Calls For Tougher Laws

Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety criticized state lawmakers for slow progress in passing laws that would reduce deaths and injuries from vehicle crashes. The safety group released its annual scorecard saying only 17 states had sufficient laws promoting child booster seats, restrictive licenses for teens, tougher drunken driving standards and stricter motorcycle helmet use. Traffic deaths account for more than 40,000 deaths annually, and yearly economic costs from crashes cost more than \$230 billion. Experts say tougher state laws are the quickest and least expensive way of reducing this cost. Read the full article at <http://www.freep.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060106/BUSINESS01/601060400/1014>

Work-Life:

ONDCP Launches Campaign To Address Teen Marijuana Use, Driving

The Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) has launched a new federal campaign to discourage marijuana use among young drivers. According to a recent survey, teenagers listed cars

as the most popular place for smoking marijuana. ONDCP warns that this increases the safety risk of two of the most dangerous teenage activities: using marijuana and driving.

Industry Strives To Accommodate Older Drivers

According to research, driving skills typically decrease with age, and government statistics reveal that senior citizens have a higher possibility of being in crashes. Recently vehicle manufacturers have become mindful of the nation's shifting age demographics and continue to develop systems to aid older drivers, such as sensor-based crash avoidance systems and other electronics. Vehicle construction itself is also changing to accommodate older drivers. Read the full article <http://www.abrn.com/abrn/article/articleDetail.jsp?id=266493>

News from the USDOT:

NHTSA Releases Impaired Driving, Occupant Protection Holiday Calendar

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has developed a 2006 calendar noting key dates concerning impaired driving and occupant protection. The calendar makes note of coordinating mini-planners, which contains materials for each holiday period highlighted that relates to impaired driving. The website, www.stopimpaireddriving.org, also contains an "archive" of planners from 2005. For more information visit <http://nhtsa.gov/people/injury/NHTSA2006Calendar.pdf>

Federal Regulators Focus On Side Impact Safety

Federal regulators, including NHTSA, are concerned that the inflatable curtains automakers are installing for protection in side-impact crashes often don't deploy in rollover crashes. According to officials, side curtains typically inflate when vehicles are hit in the side, but they don't always activate in a rollover unless the vehicles have rollover sensors or are hit in the side before they tip over. Read the full article at http://www.usatoday.com/money/autos/2005-12-29-rollover-sense-usat_x.htm

International Traffic Safety News:

New Technology To Help Reduce Pedestrian Deaths

Every year in the European Union there are more than 9,000 deaths and 200,000 injuries in which pedestrians and cyclists collide with a car. A new cutting-edge sensing system is being developed to help prevent these incidents. SAVE-U combines sensors such as radar, vision and infrared camera to increase safety for pedestrians. According to developers, the sensors will recognize pedestrians and if a pedestrian has a high probability to collide with the vehicle then automatic braking will be initiated. Read the full article at <http://istresults.cordis.europa.eu.int/index.cfm/section/news/tpl/article/%20BrowsingType/Features/ID/80033>

Can Carpooling Improve One's Driving?

Carpooling could help drivers stay safe on the roads, according to new research in the UK. Motorists carrying passengers are half as likely to be involved in a crash than those driving alone, the research by Privilege Insurance reveals. One in 10 drivers say they have been involved in a crash when driving alone, compared to just one in 20 who were driving with a passenger. Need another benefit? Four out of 10 motorists (39%) have lost concentration while driving, but only two in ten (22%) have done so when driving with a passenger.

UK Company Touts In-House Licensing Program's Successes

One of the first fleets in the UK to issue its own in-house driving licenses has released a new report outlining the results of the program, and says it has seen crashes decline by 20 percent. Maintenance

costs have been reduced by 14%, from £37,842 to £32,463, and insurance premiums for the fleet were cut by 40%. The program is designed to help companies set objectives, and asks fleet managers to apply for an online 'permit to drive' for all drivers, including employees driving non-company vehicles. Without it, employees were not allowed to drive on business. The drivers are asked a series of questions to establish their risk on the road and identify who might need further training.

Study Reveals 1 in 5 Drivers Involved In On The Job Crash

New research from the UK reveals that one out of every five motorists has been involved in a crash while driving on company business over the past five years. The new study found that men are more likely to be involved in a collision than women. Commissioned by Zurich Risk Services, the study also found that company car drivers are more likely to have a collision than those driving their own cars, with 16% having had a crash over the past five years as opposed to one in 10 own-car drivers.

Euro NCAP Considers Expanding Safety Ratings

Euro NCAP is considering adding vehicle-to-vehicle compatibility and active safety to its test ratings. The European crash-testing organization also will soon assess how well seats protect occupants from whiplash injury in a collision. Read the full article at

<http://www.autonews.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060109/FREE/60106002/1013/newsletter07&refsect=newsletter07>